

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A facsimile transmitting/receiving system comprising a standard facsimile machine and a computer based system in communication with the standard facsimile machine, the system comprising:

- 5 a. an interface positioned intermediately of and in communication with both the facsimile machine and the computer;
- b. a line for receiving and sending facsimile signals in communication with the interface for selectively communicating directly with the facsimile machine and the computer; and
- c. means for converting encoded documents to formats compatible with computer supported systems and with the facsimile machine.

2. The facsimile system of claim 1, wherein said means is further adapted for converting facsimile signals to a format for transmission over distributive communication networks and for converting network transmitted signals in a format for transmission over a facsimile transmission line.

3. The facsimile system of claim 2, wherein said interface further includes means for sending and receiving facsimile signals over a standard telephone line.

4. The facsimile system of claim 2, wherein said interface further includes means for sending and receiving facsimile signals between the computer and the facsimile machine.

5. The facsimile system of claim 3, wherein said interface further includes means for sending and receiving facsimile signals between the facsimile machine and the telephone line.

6. The facsimile system of claim 3, wherein said interface further includes means for sending and receiving facsimile signals between the computer and the telephone line.

7. The facsimile system of claim 1, the interface further comprising a signal generator for producing a signal whenever a facsimile signal is transmitted to the facsimile machine.

8. The facsimile system of claim 7, wherein said signal generator produces a simulated ring activation signal to simulate a telephone ring whenever a facsimile signal is to be transmitted to the facsimile machine.

9. A method for transmitting a facsimile signal from a local station to a remote station via a distributive communication network comprising the steps of:

- a. generating a facsimile signal utilizing a standard facsimile machine at the local station;
- b. converting the signal to a format compatible with the network; and
- c. transmitting the converted signal via the network to a remote station.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein both the local station and the remote station are facsimile machines, and further comprising the steps of:

- a. receiving the converted, transmitted signal at the remote station;
- b. reconvertng the transmitted signal to a facsimile format; and
- c. receiving the reconverted, transmitted signal at a standard facsimile machine.

11. A method for transmitting a facsimile signal from a local station to a remote station via a distributive communication network comprising the steps of:

- a. generating a facsimile signal at the local station;
- b. converting the signal to a format compatible with the network; and
- c. transmitting the converted signal via the network to a remote station.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein the generated signal is received at the local station via a telephone line.

13. The method of claim 11, wherein the generated signal is received at the local station via a local facsimile machine.

14. The method of claim 11, wherein the local station includes a telephone transmission line, a local facsimile machine and a network interface and wherein the facsimile signal at the local station can be transmitted/received selectively by any of the telephone transmission line, the local facsimile machine and the network interface.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein the network interface is a personal computer.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the facsimile signal at the local station may be transmitted directly to the computer for manipulation by additional software support programs.

17. An interface for use in combination with a facsimile receiving/sending station and an Internet interface, comprising means for converting a signal to be transmitted/received by the facsimile station to/from a format compatible with the network.

18. The network of claim 17, further comprising a telephone line in communication with the interface, and means for selective directing a facsimile signal between the telephone line, the network interface and the facsimile receiving/sending station.

19. The network of claim 18, wherein said network interface comprises a personal computer.

[illegible]